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Integrating SDG-6 and SDG-14 with an Islamic Perspective: A Case Study of Pakistan

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Abstract

Human life, fertility, cleanliness and purity all depends on water. Water is used for domestic purposes; and in agriculture and industrial sector. The United Nations adopted SDGs in 2015 (*Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*), with an aim to eradicate injustice, lack of sanitation, poverty, inequalities, hunger, global environmental crisis and economic crisis by 2030. The 17 Sustainable Developmental Goals (SDGs) model provides a blue print for a better world. Pakistan was among the nations who readily adopted this plan and aligned it with their vision 2025. SDG-6 (clean water and sanitation) and SDG-14 (life below water) are goals designed to protect the environment from depleting water resources. The current study aims to highlight that human survival depends on ecological balance. Our study will be based on qualitative textual methodology extracting and analyzing as to how SDGs from an Islamic outlook reflects on these principles; and how they coincide with the ethical considerations mentioned in the Qur'an and Sunnah. The purpose of this paper is to explore how Islamic values compliments SDG-6 and SDG-14 by providing spiritual foundation for environmental sustainability. The study also enumerates opportunities and challenges in Pakistan to implement the policies. After introduction our paper will focus on brief explanation of SDG-6 and SDG-14 goals. Later on, we will align these goals with Islamic perspective. Subsequently we will discuss efforts and challenges that Pakistan face to achieve these goals followed by conclusive remarks.

Keywords: Sustainable development, faith-based ethics, clean water, Sanitation, Islamic environmental ethics

Introduction

United Nations Sustainable Developmental Goals (SDGs) provided a global framework for sustainable environment and economic progress in 2015 and aim to achieve it by 2030.[1] Unlike

[1]Khalid Rahman, "Realizing Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): Need for an Indigenous Approach," *Policy Perspectives* 13, no. 2 (2016): 3.

other plans, SDG gained recognition and drew attention because this plan has been readily adopted by every country (rich or poor alike) ensuring that all nations are responsible for prosperity of people and our planet Earth. Our current developmental efforts will ensure that we conserve resources for future generations. Moreover, as a Muslim nation, Pakistan incorporates Qur'ānic moral values i.e., balance (*mezān*), justice (*adl*) and compassion/ mercy (*Rahmah*).[2] Thus both the frameworks of sustainability by UN and Islam coincide in protecting human life, conserving environment and terminating injustice.[3]

For developing countries like Pakistan SDGs are vital as they also addresses national challenges (like poverty and hunger [SDG-1 and SDG-2]; water scarcity and sanitation [SDG-6]; quality education [SDG-4]; climatic crisis [SDG-13, SDG-14 and SDG-15]; economic disparities [SDG-1 and SDG-10]; and gender inequalities [SDG-5]). Therefore Pakistan made sustainable development central to its national policy and incorporated it into their vision 2025.[4] The current study will focus on SDG-6 (Clean Water and Sanitation) and SDG-14 (Life below Water) as both of these are essential in maintaining ecological balance, human health and sustainable livelihood. Preserving water resources are essential for human survival and biodiversity. Since Pakistan is a Muslim majority country,[5] we will relate sustainable goals with Islamic environmental ethics. The Holy Qur'ān and other sources of Islamic tradition recognize that all of the planet's inhabitants are alive because water exists, and that water and air are the two factors that perpetuate life on earth. Therefore, conserving water, keeping it clean and making accessible for all is the collective responsibility of all Muslims.[6]

The following sections will discuss SDG-6 and SDG-14 in detail before proceeding to Islamic outlook on these goals.

2. Future of Water in Pakistan: SDG-6 and SDG-14

SDG-6 and SDG-14 are ecologically interlinked. If rivers are contaminated by industrial wastes and other pollutants then they will cause harm to marine life. Similarly, damaged coastal ecosystem would likely result in poor water quality and flood risks. Qur'ānic teachings inspired people towards a faith-based ethics by protecting freshwater and marine systems. The study aims at answering following questions:

A. How SDG-6 and SDG-14 are connected with Islamic environmental ethics?
B. How Pakistan can attain sustainable developmental goals in SDG-index by 2030?
C. What are the issues that Pakistan faced to implement SDG policies?

[2]Rahman, "Realizing Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)," 4.
[3]Farooq Ahmad Bakloo, and Asma, "Islamic Perspectives on Sustainable Development," *Pakistan Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* 16, no. 4 (2018): 523.
[4]"National Water Policy of Pakistan," Ministry of Water Resources (Lahore: Government of Pakistan, 2018), https://mowr.gov.pk/SiteImage/Misc/files/National%20Water%20Policy.pdf
[5]Rahman, "Realizing Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)," 8.
[6]Barkat Shah Kakar, *Sustainable Developmental Goals SDGs and Islam:Contextualizing the Sustainable Developmental Goals in the Normative Framework of Islamic Tradition* (Development Policy Unit, UNDP Pakistan, Planning and Development Department, Quetta: Government of Balochistan, 2022), 12-13, https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2023-06/undp_balochistan_sdgs_and_islam.pdf

2.1. SDG-6: Clean Water and Sanitation

Accessibility of clean and healthy water is a basic necessity of life and contributes to equality, justice and dignity. Unfortunately, surveys show that nearly 2.2 billion people on a global level lacks access to clean drinking water causing waterborne diseases, while 785 million people lacks access to basic water services.[7] "While substantial progress has been made in increasing access to clean drinking water and sanitation, billions of people—mostly in rural areas—still lack these basic services 9% of the global population still practiced open defecation in 2017."[8] It is also forewarned by United Nations that in the near future 700 million will be displaced due to scarcity of water.[9] Similarly, according to the UNESCO report, 80% wastewater is neither recycled nor used rather it flows back to the ecosystem causing severe environmental hazards. SDG-6 is a goal directed to "ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all."[10]

Pakistan is enumerated among the water-stressed nations. According to the WWF (2022) Report, Pakistan's per capita availability of water is falling below 1000 cubic meters annually whereas it was 5300 cubic meter at the time of independence.[11] This water scarcity is due to rapid increase in population.[12] Fig. 1 shows the causes of water scarcity in Pakistan.

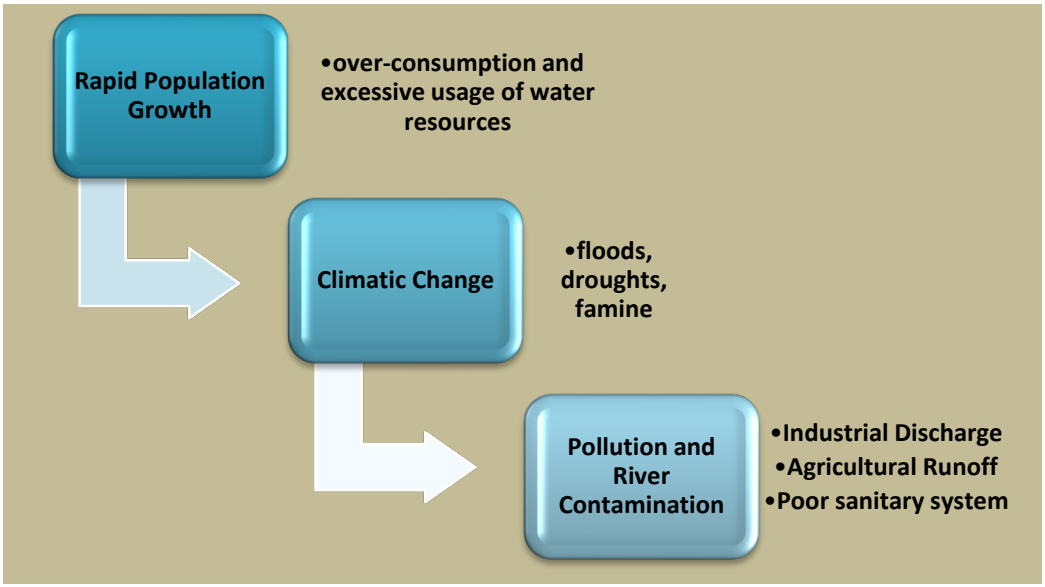

Figure 1. Reasons for Water Scarcity in Pakistan

[7]Kakar, *Sustainable Developmental Goals SDGs and Islam,* 12.

[8]"Action for People and Planet: United Nations High Level Week," 2019, https://www.un.org/en/summits2019/

[9]Kakar, *Sustainable Developmental Goals SDGs and Islam,* 12.

[10]"Sustainable Development: The 17 Goals," *United Nations: Department of Economic and Social Affairs*, 2015, https://sdgs.un.org/goals (accessed April 09, 2025).

[11]Muhammad Ashraf, *Importance of Water in the Light of Qur'ān and Sunnah and Ways of its Saving* (Pakistan Council of Research in Water Resources (PCRWR), Islamabad: Government of Pakistan, 2015), 9.

[12]Ashraf, *Importance of Water in the Light of Qur'ān and Sunnah,* 9.

While 53% people lack clean water and sanitation in Pakistan; nearly 68% population of Sindh villages indulge in open defecation resulting into waterborne diseases like cholera.[13] This also resulted into gender disparity in water-stressed areas.

In order to address these challenges Islamic principles can inspire the nation and government alike to implement policy and take community action. Reviving the *waqf* system (public water purification projects); encouraging moderate consumption of water as a spiritual and ethical duty; and awareness campaigns and community level education that links water conservation with religious practices.

2.2. SDG-14: Life Below Water

Oceans and seas are the major water sources that regulate food chain and sustain livelihoods of billions. It also supports different species of life below water. However, due to pollution, oil-spillage, coastal degradation and over fishing: the marine eco-system has been exposed to severe threats not only endangering marine life but causing loss of habitat as well.[14] It is estimated that by 2100 the CO_2 emissions will increase the ocean acidity 100-150%.[15] SDG-14 is a goal directed to "conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development."[16]

The coastline of Sindh and Baluchistan support millions of livelihoods in Pakistan. However, its biodiversity and economic security is threatened due to following reasons:

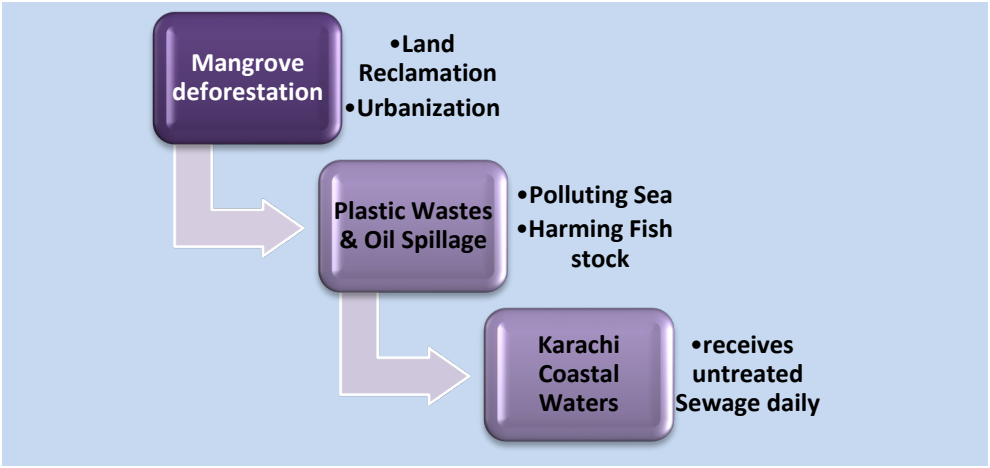

Figure 2. Reasons for Marine and Coastal issues in Pakistan

[13]Shahida Begum, and Ahmed Ali, "Water Scarcity in Pakistan: Analyzing its Political, Social, and Economic Impacts," *Indus Journal of Social Sciences* 3, no. 2 (May 2025): 434, http://doi.org/10.59075/ijss.v3i2.1275

[14]Jeffery D. Sachs,Guillaume Lafortune, Grayson Fuller, and Guilherme Lablonovski, *Financing Sustainable Development to 2030 and Mid-Century, Sustainable Development Report* 2025 (Dublin: Dublin University Press, 2025), 25, https://s3.amazonaws.com/sustainabledevelopment.report/2025/sustainable-development-report-2025.pdf

[15]As of present, Ocean acidity is 26% higher as compared to pre-industrial times. See, "Action for People and Planet: United Nations High Level Week," *SDG Summit 2019,* September 21-27, 2019. https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/24711SDG_Summit.pdf (accessed May 23, 2025).

[16]"Sustainable Development: The 17 Goals," *United Nations: Department of Economic and Social Affairs* (2015), https://sdgs.un.org/goals (accessed April 09, 2025).

In order to navigate from these adverse effects, Islamic teachings can guide us to implement corrective measures by promoting halal livelihood ethics, clean coast initiatives as *Sadqah e Jariya* (continuous charity)[17]; and launching campaigns on marine stewardship. The combined efforts by government and NGOs can meet SDG-14 targets.

3. Aligning SDG-6 and SDG-14 with Islamic Principles

3.1. Sacred Water, Shared Seas: Importance of Water in Islam

The sustainable development is not a novel concept in Islam rather it aligns with Islamic principles of Qur'ān and *Sunnah*.[18] The mandate of Islam regarding environment is that man is the steward on earth and the divine creation is bestowed to him as trust (*Amanah*). Moreover, cleanliness (*taharah*) is also considered a virtue. In fact ablution (*wuzu*) is a way to purify oneself before prayers and funerals (*Janazah*). This shows that it is our moral obligation as Muslims to keep water pure and accessible. Water has been mentioned almost 85 times in the Qur'ān.[19] According to Zia H. Shah, Qur'ān appeals to nature and natural laws[20] because several facts of modern science correlate with Qur'ān.[21]

Each verse of Qur'ān explains the importance of water:

- On several occasions water has been considered as the building block and a symbolic representation of life. "Do the disbelievers not realize that the heavens and earth were ˹once˺ one mass then We split them apart? And We created from water every living thing. Will they not then believe?"[22] Likewise, all life form (species) has been created from water. "And Allah has created from water every living creature. Some of them crawl on their bellies, some walk on two legs, and some walk on four. Allah creates whatever He wills. Surely Allah is Most Capable of everything."[23]
- Water as rain is considered a provision "The One Who has made the earth a bed for you and kept operative roads for you in it and sent down water from the sky; so with it We produced different pairs of vegetation."[24]
- Water also revives life and barren land:

[17]Muslim b Hajjaj, *Sahih Muslim,* "The Book of Musaqah," Chapter: The Virtue of Planting and Cultivating, Hadīth no, 1553a, https://sunnah.com/muslim:1553a, As per Hadīth: "The person who plants fruit tree or grows a field crop from where human beings, animals and birds get food is a "Sadqa" for him."; Ashraf, *Importance of Water in the Light of Qur'ān and Sunnah,* 6.

[18]Hamida Milad Aburounia, and M. Sexton, "Islam and Sustainable Development," *The 6th International Postgraduate Research Conference in the Built and Human Environment* (University of Salford, 2022), 756-759.

[19]Zia H. Shah, "The Miracle of Water and the Miracle of the Qur'ān," *The Glorius Qur'ān and Science* (May 19, 2023), https://theQur'ān.love/2023/05/19/the-miracle-of-water-and-the-miracle-of-the-Qur'ān/ (accessed April 17, 2025), Although the word 'water' (*bahr*) itself has been mentioned 32 times; but it is also mentioned in other forms like rain, sea etc. in Qur'ān.

[20]Zia H. Shah, "The Miracle of Water and the Miracle of the Qur'ān," *The Glorius Qur'ān and Science*.

[21]Maurice Bucaille, *The Bible, the Qur'ān and Science,* trans., Alastair D. Pannell and Maurice Bucaille [Islamic Book Service, 2001 (1976)]

[22]Al-Anbiya 21:30.

[23]an Nur 24:45.

[24]at- Ta ha 20:53.

And We send down blessed rain from the sky, bringing forth gardens and grains for harvest, and towering palm trees loaded with clustered fruit, as a provision for Our servants. And with this rain. We revive a lifeless land. Similar is the emergence from the graves.[25]

- Water is indirectly considered as a source of food since all species directly or indirectly relies on plants to obtain energy whether they are herbivores, carnivores' or omnivores. And scientifically, plants obtain their energy through 'photosynthesis'. "Water is a part of the photosynthetic process that is energy supply for the whole of the plant kingdom and eventually indirectly for all the animals as well on our planet earth."[26] In addition, food can be directly obtained from water:

  And He is the One Who has subjected the sea, so from it you may eat tender seafood and extract ornaments to wear. And you see the ships ploughing their way through it, so you may seek His bounty and give thanks ˹to Him˺[27]

- Water used in agriculture and cattle rearing consumed 70% more than used for domestic purposes.[28]

  And remember when Moses prayed for water for his people, We said, "Strike the rock with your staff." Then twelve springs gushed out, and each tribe knew its drinking place. We then said, "Eat and drink of Allah's provisions, and do not go about spreading corruption in the land."[29] (

- Allah has created border between sweet and saline water.[30] This has been mentioned in various chapters (*Surah)* of the Qur'ān.[31] Its stated at another place: "Or ˹ask them,˺ "Who made the earth a place of settlement, caused rivers to flow through it, placed firm mountains upon it, and set a barrier between ˹fresh and salt˺ bodies of water? Was it another god besides Allah?" Absolutely not! But most of them do not know.[32]

  Considering the fact that water evaporates from the sea to form clouds and fall as rain into fresh water yet rain water is not saline like sea proves itself the miracle of Almighty.

- Water cycle was explained in the Qur'ān centuries before Bernard Pallissay (1510-1590).[33]

Do you not see that Allah gently drives the clouds, then joins them together, piling them up into masses, from which you see raindrops come forth? And He sends down from the Sky Mountains of clouds loaded with hail, pouring it on whoever He wills and averting it from whoever He wills. The flash of the clouds' lightning nearly takes away eyesight.[34]

[25]Qaf 50:9-11.
[26]Shah, "The Miracle of Water and the Miracle of the Qur'ān."
[27]An Nahl 16:14.
[28]Ashraf, *Importance of Water in the Light of Qur'ān and Sunnah,* 4-5.
[29]Al- Baqarah 02:60.
[30]Ashraf, *Importance of Water in the Light of Qur'ān and Sunnah,* 8-9.
[31]al-Waqiah 56:68-70; al-Fatir 35:12; al-Furqan 25:23.
[32]An Naml 27:61.
[33]Bernard Pallissay presented scientific version of the water cycle in 1580 AD. See Ashraf, *Importance of Water in the Light of Qur'ān and Sunnah,* 8.
[34]An-Nur 24:43.

- Qur'ān mentions that only Allah holds the reserves of water: "We send fertilizing winds, and bring down rain from the sky for you to drink. It is not you who hold its reserves."[35]
- Also, it is to be noted that Allah sends water in measured quantity[36]: "And He is the One Who sends down rain from the sky in perfect measure, with which We give life to a lifeless land. And so will you be brought forth from the grave."[37]

3.2. The Role of Mankind in Depleting Ecological Balance

Water can be both a blessing and a curse: blessing for those who can have easy access to it and curse for those who can't. Allah has also forewarned in Qur'ān that Earth's water resources can be depleted, "If all your water were to sink deep in the earth who could give you flowing water in its place?"[38] All over the world, climatic change and global warming are causing natural disasters like droughts, famine, floods, earthquakes and tsunamis:

> And as soon as they are overwhelmed by waves like mountains, they cry out to Allah ˹alone˺ in sincere devotion. But when He delivers them ˹safely˺ to shore, only some become relatively grateful. And none rejects Our signs except whoever is deceitful, ungrateful.[39]

Islamic mandate is clear that if man messes with nature it messes back at us. "Corruption has spread on land and sea as a result of what people's hands have done, so that Allah may cause them to taste the consequences of some of their deeds and perhaps they might return to the Right Path."[40] The aforementioned verse entails that ecological disruption and environmental crisis are the result of human moral failure attributing to humankind's greed, excess and neglect in stewardship bestowed upon him by Almighty. Islam therefore not only made environmental responsibility as part of faith but also holds man accountable for his duty towards it. The concept of public welfare (*maslaha*) makes it incumbent on Muslims collectively as governmental body and communities to manage resources responsibly that could enhance collective benefits and minimizes harm.

3.3. Moderate Consumption

Although sanitation and hygiene is not the concern since Pakistan is a Muslim majority country and Islam focus on cleanliness. However, people over-consume water during cleanliness and sanitation.[41] Islamic environmental ethics blends the concept of moderation, balance (*mezān*), justice (*adl*); and stewardship (*khilafa*) and trust (*amanah*).[42] Hence, conserving natural resources, protecting creation (including marine life), preventing pollution (waterborne, airborne etc.) are considered acts of worship (*ibadah*). Exploiting water resources (oceans, sea-water, river-water etc.) violates limitations ordained by Qur'ān and *Sunnah*; and disrupts the ecological balance.[43]

[35]al-Hijr 15:22.
[36]See Ashraf, *Importance of Water in the Light of Qur'ān and Sunnah,* 12.
[37]Az-Zukhruf 43:11.
[38]Al-Mulk 67:30.
[39]Luqman 31:32.
[40]Ar Rum 30:41.
[41]Bakloo, and Asma, "Islamic Perspectives on Sustainable Development," 521.
[42]Rahman, "Realizing Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)," 6-7.
[43]Zubair Hasan, "Sustainable Development from an Islamic Perspective: Meaning, Implications, and Policy Concerns," *Journal of King Abdulaziz University: Islamic Economics* 19, no. 1 (2006): 9.

The mandate of Islam on environmental ethics promotes moderate consumption.[44] "They are those who spend neither wastefully nor stingily, but moderately in between.[45]

As far as SDG-6 and SDG-14 are concerned, they correlate with Islamic teachings. "Islam forbids Muslims from any form of action or inaction that harms the environment and any form of life, both on land and below water."[46] In order to ensure that everyone can success sustainable clean water and sanitation, humans should refrain themselves from polluting water. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) endorsed the vitality of cleanliness and providing water to others a most valuable donation. "Abu Dawud reports that, when the Prophet Muhammad was asked, "Which charity is the best? He replied, [Providing] Water."[47]

Wasting water is also forbidden in Islam. One cannot waste water unnecessarily not even for ablution. Al-Tirmidhi states: "Do not waste water even if performing ablution on the bank of a fast-flowing large river."[48] Water is a collective resource for people shared by not only the present generation but also the future generation. Hence, humans are accountable for every drop of water that they consumed, so it is imperative that Muslims consume water in a careful manner. Our overindulgence, overconsumption, hoarding and unsustainable usage of resources will have a negative impact on the quality of life for future generations.[49]

4. Case Study of Pakistan: Discussion and Commentary

Pakistan is enlisted among the top-ten climatic vulnerable countries owing to the severe climatic changes and global warming.[50] The glaciers-meltdown (Himalayan region) fed the Indus River and its tributaries leading to massive foods of 2022 and 2025. Also rainfall reduced to 18% in dry regions during last 10 years.[51] Being a semi-arid country, it relies on Indus River and its tributaries for water resources that contribute 175 billion cubic meters annually.[52] In 2010, Pakistan's per capita stooped to 1000m^3 enumerating it among the water-scarce countries.[53]

4.1. Pakistan's Endeavor to attain SDG-6 and SDG-14

Based on the Islamic perspective on Environmental ethics (particularly while treating water), following policies has been made to ensure that Pakistan achieves higher scores in SDG-index by 2030:

[44]Aadil Gulzar, Tajamul Islam, Muhammad Anees Khan, and Shiekh Mari, "Environmental Ethics towards Sustainable Development in Islamic Perspective,"" *Ethnobotany Research and Applications*, 2021), 1.

[45]Al Furqan 25:67.

[46]Kakar, *Sustainable Developmental Goals SDGs and Islam,* 26.

[47]Abu Dawud Sulayman ibn al-Ash'ath as-Sijistani, *Sunan Abu Dawud,* "The Book of Zakat," Chapter: On the Excellence of Supplying Drinking Water, Hadīth no. 1681, https://sunnah.com/abudawud:1681, Kakar, *Sustainable Developmental Goals SDGs and Islam,* 13.

[48]Muhammad bin Yazid Ibn Majah al-Qazvini, *Sunan ibn Majah,* "The Book of Purification and its Sunnah," Chapter: Concerning moderation in ablution and avoiding extravagance, Hadīth no. 425, https://sunnah.com/ibnmajah:425; Kakar, *Sustainable Developmental Goals SDGs and Islam,* 13.

[49]Kakar, *Sustainable Developmental Goals SDGs and Islam,* 13.

[50]Muhammad Zeshan, "Water Governance Challenges in Pakistan," *Pakistan Accountability Lab,* (2025), 17, https://pakistan.accountabilitylab.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Policy-Brief-English-Water-Governance-in-Pakistan.pdf (accessed May 10, 2025).

[51]Begum, and Ahmed Ali, "Water Scarcity in Pakistan," 433.

[52]Ministry of Water Resources, "National Water Conservation Strategy for Pakistan (2023-2027)," *Policy Document*, Pakistan Council of Research in Water Resources (Islamabad: Government of Pakistan, 2023), 1.

[53]Ministry of Water Resources, "National Water Conservation Strategy for Pakistan (2023-2027)," 1.

- Avoid polluting water sources (like rivers, seas and oceans).
- According to Sunnah, water resources are part of community rights and it is forbidden to hoard it.[54]
- Oil spillage is common occurrence globally. Over the last 50 years alone, nearly 1700 major oil-spill incidents has been documented; of which almost 92 incidents were identified in Pakistan.[55] On 27th July 2003, nearly 30,000 tons of oil spilled from an Iranian vessel near Pakistan's Karachi seaport.[56] To prevent oil spills in the sea, government should restrict that transport should be double hulled with proper equipment safety and maintenance. Furthermore, transporting oil via land routes is far safer and easily containable in case of accidents as compared to sea. In this regard CPEC (China-Pakistan Economic Corridor) could be Pakistan's safest and major transportation boost.
- Water scarcity in Pakistan is negatively affecting the productivity of fisheries and livestock. Smart irrigating techniques will ensure food security as well.[57]
- Public should consciously refrain from overconsumption and inefficient management of water resources[58] (for instance, sustainable withdrawals (i.e., minimum water consumption) for household chores for e.g., car washing, laundry, washing dishes, during ablution or taking a bath. In this regard, Pakistani government "launches mass awareness programs for water conservation to reduce wastewater generation."[59]
- Government should also ensure that the entire country gets equal access to safe drinking water. As of 2024, only 47% of the population has access to safe drinking water.[60] A proper groundwater monitoring system should be established all over the country.[61]
- Government should introduce and promote water saving technologies like non-conventional water sources for irrigation and livestock farming.[62] Non-conventional technologies are secondary treated sewerage water, sea-water and rain water etc. By using these technologies, the government could also attain Zero Liquid Discharge (ZLD) for residential and commercial areas.[63]

[54]Fatima Zohra Aouati, and Khaled Obaideen, "Sustainable Development Goal 6 and the Prophetic Guidance on Water: A Hadīth-Based Framework," *Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization* 15, no. 02 (2025): 151.

[55]Abdul Basit, Muhammad Adnan Siddique , Salman Bashir, Ehtasham Naseer, and Muhammad Saquib Sarfraz, "Deep Learning-Based Detection of Oil Spills in Pakistan's Exclusive Economic Zone from January 2017 to December 2023," *Remote Sens* 16, no. 13 (2024): 2432.

[56]"TASMAN SPIRIT, Pakistan, 2003," *ITOPF* 2003, https://www.itopf.org/in-action/case-studies/tasman-spirit-pakistan-2003/ (accessed October 28, 2025).

[57]Begum, and Ahmed Ali, "Water Scarcity in Pakistan: Analyzing Its Political, Social, And Economic Impacts," 431.

[58]Aouati, Fatima Zohra, and Khaled Obaideen, "Sustainable Development Goal 6 and the Prophetic Guidance on Water: A Hadīth-Based Framework," *Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization* 15, no. 02 (2025): 151.

[59]Ministry of Water Resources, "National Water Conservation Strategy for Pakistan (2023-2027)," 2.

[60]Abdul Rasheed Azad, *Business Recorder* (October 23, 2025), https://www.brecorder.com/news/40388790 (accessed October 29, 2025, and (Drinking Water Quality in Pakistan: Current Status and Challenges 2021)

[61]Rasheed Azad, *Business Recorder* (October 23, 2025), 4.

[62]Ministry of Water Resources, "National Water Conservation Strategy for Pakistan (2023-2027)," 2.

[63]*National Water Policy of Pakistan,* Ministry of Water Resources, 24.

- Pakistan population is rapidly increasing; the current population figure is 240 million as of 2024.[64] Hence, taking population control measures to slow-down population growth is imperative to lessen the demand on water consumption.[65]
- The government should ensure water metering and pricing in residential and commercial areas; and financial auditing of water suppliers annually.[66] "Volumetric pricing, paired with subsidies for drip irrigation, could save 10-12 MAF annually."[67] In addition they should schedule leak detection and repair mechanism.[68]
- Storage, conservation & efficiency, leveraging technology,[69] renewable energy, integrated water resources management, comprehensive regulatory framework, and planning principles are the chief tenets of National Water Policy 2018.[70]
- Government should invest in saving water, recycling and rain water technologies.[71] For this purpose increasing budget for water sector is important along with monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.[72]
- The government should develop Islamic finance (for e.g. *Sharī'ah*-compliant bonds) for Green projects like waste water management and water treatment plants. According to Rahman internalizing private charity could also help in channelizing resources.[73]
- In order to cope with scarcity and ensure sustainability government should made a combine effort with NGO's and other organizations to raise awareness campaigns at all levels of society.[74]
- Engaging mosques and madrasas is also a vital step to align SDG goals with Islamic perspective.[75] Including Qur'ānic teachings regarding conservation of environment in curriculums. In order to foster behavioral change, encouraging eco-friendly Friday sermons in mosques can also help people to understand the importance of water conservation.
- Most importantly, political will is required to resolve inter-political and inter-provincial conflicts prioritizing nation's well-being over one's own benefits.[76]

These rules require efforts on community and individual level, whereby government role is to provide effective coordination among stakeholders and institutions in order to ensure that these

[64]Muhammad Zeshan, "Water Governance Challenges in Pakistan," 8,
[65]Ministry of Water Resources, "National Water Conservation Strategy for Pakistan (2023-2027)," 11.
[66]*National Water Policy of Pakistan,* Ministry of Water Resources, 20.
[67]Muhammad Zeshan, "Water Governance Challenges in Pakistan," *Pakistan Accountability Lab* (2025), 17.
[68]*National Water Policy of Pakistan.* National Water Policy, Ministry of water Resources, 22.
[69] Leveraging technology is the adoption of digital tools to improve and optimize growth, efficiency and productivity,
[70]*National Water Policy of Pakistan,* Ministry of Water Resources.
[71]*National Water Policy of Pakistan,* Ministry of Water Resources, 23.
[72]Muhammad Zeshan, "Water Governance Challenges in Pakistan," 5.
[73]Rahman, "Realizing Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)," 20.
[74]Rahman, "Realizing Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)," 25.
[75]In Pakistani society, nearly 82% males visit mosques. Rahman, "Realizing Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)," 20.
[76]Begum, and Ahmed Ali, "Water Scarcity in Pakistan," 437.

policies are implemented and abided by the citizens. Furthermore, transparency, and accountability are key factors to ensure success in water conservation projects.[77]

4.2. Problems in Policy Implementation

Despite the aforementioned efforts, the current SDG-index shows that Pakistan is at 140th rank in 2025 with 56.97 score.[78] This score is not sufficient to attain sustainability by the deadline of 2030. Although, Pakistan's National Water Policy (2018) supports and endorse sustainable management, but regressive data indicates that Pakistani nation lacks faith-based ethics (in addition to climatic change, inadequate infrastructure and population growth) to achieve SDG-6 and SDG-14 by 2030.[79]

Table 1. Challenges Faced by Pakistan to attain SDG-6 and SDG-14 by 2030

Challenges	Factors Contributing to Challenges	Sub Total/ Overall Loss	Further Complications	Overall % in implementation/ Decline
Inefficient Usage	Agricultural consumption of water	90%	Output contribution in GDP	20%
Lack of implementing new technologies to Cut down consumption	Cut-down water consumption via drip and sprinkle irrigation	60%	However, this method is implemented insignificant portion of an irrigated land	<5%
Institutional inefficiencies	Strain water management	---	Poor investment in modern infrastructure; and slow adoption of modern irrigated methods by farmers	---
Annual River flow Reduction	Indus River flow	Declined by 20-30%	Kabul River tributary in Peshawar	Declined by 15-20%
Non-Revenue Water	Leakage and theft	40-50% loss	---	---
Canal Water Loss	Evaporation Seepage	40-60%	---	---

[77]Muhammad Zeshan, "Water Governance Challenges in Pakistan," 18.

[78]Sachs, Lafortune, Fuller, and Guilherme Lablonovski, *Financing Sustainable Development to 2030 and Mid-Century,* Sustainable Development Report (2025).

[79]Muhammad Zeshan, "Water Governance Challenges in Pakistan," 3-6.

Challenges	Factors Contributing to Challenges	Sub Total/ Overall Loss	Further Complications	Overall % in implementation/ Decline
Equitable Access and ineffectiveness of water supply model	Lack access to clean drinking water	22 million people (53% population)	---	---
Fisheries and Livestock Industry	Indus Delta reduction impacted marine life in freshwater; and increased salinity	Loss of 125 million per annum in Sindh alone	Food insecurity	60% in drought zones; and 12% inflation in food-pricing
Gender-disparity due to water scarcity	More household works to carry water; refrain from acquiring education (UNICEF, 2023 report);	68% girls lacks access to clean water	psychological toll on women in drought zones	62%
Inter-political and inter-provincial conflicts	Postpones important projects like Diamer-Bhasha Dam	60% water development projects has been postponed due to political conflicts	---	---
Displacement due to Scarcity	Drought induced migration	3.5 million in 2018	Water disputes among people	78% in KPK villages; 300% in Tharparker (Sindh and Baluchistan affecting the most)

The aforementioned data has been compiled from Pakistan Water Conservation Policies[80]

[80]Muhammad Zeshan, "Water Governance Challenges in Pakistan,"; *National Water Policy of Pakistan,* Ministry of Water Resources Ministry of Water Resources, "National Water Conservation Strategy for Pakistan (2023-2027)"; Begum, and Ahmed Ali, "Water Scarcity in Pakistan: Analyzing Its Political, Social, And Economic Impacts,"; Rasheed Azad, *Business Recorder* (October 23, 2025).

Table 1 also help us understands the complexity and severity of water scarcity due to interwining of multiple other crisis extending out of root-problem. However, discussing them in detail is beyond the scope of this study.

It is however noteworthy, that various scholars believe that environmental ethics is an outcome of neglecting core values of Islam.[81] Water crisis demands the cooperation from all sectors, yet due to personal benefits and gains people violate rules to conserve water; industrial sector violates policies and government fails to ensure that the policies are duly and promptly implemented. Businessmen used bribery, tax evasion and other means to violate the policies and evade accountability.

Unfortunately, Pakistan fails to incorporate faith-based ethics while trying to implement policies. Scholars believed that Pakistan lacks motivation to understand the severity of water scarcity and sustainability; and this could be made possible if the link between Islamic laws regarding water and Pakistani laws are restored or revived. "When environmental ethics is based on Islamic theocentrism and theology, it is feasible to have a more inclusive and holistic approach towards the conservation of the natural surroundings."[82] In order for public to contribute their due share, they need to realize that conserving resources are not just governmental policies but in fact deeply associated with faith (*imān*). These policies are in fact absolute laws in Islam; and complying with them is incumbent and binding on every Muslim.

5. Pakistan's Path to SDG-6 and SDG-14 through an Islamic Lens

SDGs garnered importance as they unite the world with a common vision for development. It is a unique effort in human history that is striving for sustainability, peace and prosperity for all. However, it is vital to comprehend that sustainable development is not merely a socio-political agenda that economists can resolve alone; rather it involves moral aspect to it as well.[83] Islam supports sustainable development;[84] and urge Muslims to manage water resources properly whether for domestic purposes or for agricultural and industrial purpose. Failing to conserve resources is not only akin to ingratitude of Allah's blessing but also detrimental to marine life and future generations.[85]

For Muslims, the pursuit of SDG-6 and SDG-14 are not only economical and technical in nature but also linked with spiritual and moral values of Islam. Islam urges mankind to use their resources responsibly; to protect the Earth; and to coexist peacefully with Allah's creation. Hence, moderate and mindful consumption of water is the key to attain higher ranks in SDG-index. Pakistan have an immense potential to incorporate religious values in sustainable goals for development. In spite of well-structured National Water Conservation Strategy for Pakistan[86] and *National Water Policy* (2018) Pakistan fails to attain their benchmark. The most challenging task isto implement those policies and raise Islamic awareness towards the severity of environmental crisis. Although, from the current SDG-index it is difficult for Pakistan to accomplish its target in

[81]Gulzar, et.al., "Environmental Ethics towards Sustainable Development in Islamic Perspective."

[82]Gulzar, et.al., "Environmental Ethics towards Sustainable Development in Islamic Perspective."

[83]Zubair Hasan, "Sustainable Development from an Islamic Perspective: Meaning, Implications, and Policy Concerns," *Journal of King Abdulaziz University: Islamic Economics* 19, no. 1 (2006): 16.

[84]Bakloo, and Asma, "Islamic Perspectives on Sustainable Development," 521; Aburounia, and M. Sexton, "Islam and Sustainable Development," 757.

[85]Kakar, *Sustainable Developmental Goals SDGs and Islam,* 13.

[86]Ministry of Water Resources, "National Water Conservation Strategy for Pakistan (2023-2027)."

the remaining 5 years owing to climatic change, demographic pressure, poor infrastructure and institutional inefficiencies. But there is ray of hope that the blend with Islamic ethics and global SDG agenda, Pakistan can pave a path to an environmentally balanced and spiritually conscious future for next generations.

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